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THE OLD HOUSE AT DUNKENFIELD.

CHAPTER II.

"To M. M.— If this should meet the eye of the youth who left his home on Wednesday night, the 14th of August, and travelled by the — mail to No. 65, 1853.

London, he is earnestly requested to return to his parents, when all that is past shall be forgiven. His mother and L—— are in great distress on his account, and they implore him to write to them without delay."

I can't say, to a certainty, that these were the exact words; but as near as I can recollect, they were the words that were put into the newspapers. Not many people at Dunkenfield saw the newspapers, I dare say; but those who did, and read that advertisement, knew what it meant, and who M. M. was.

I don't defend May Milbrook for running away from home. Of course he ought not to have done it, and he had cause to be sorry for it all his life afterwards; and I know he *was* sorry for it to the last. But as there is a verse in scripture telling children to honour and obey their parents, so there are others that say, "Ye fathers, provoke not your children to anger." And these holy commandments are coupled together like—one put against the other—just to show, I take it, that there is danger both ways; and I should say, "what God has joined together, let no man put asunder." I know one thing, and that is, that where parents do provoke their children to anger, there is the least honour and obedience; and I know another thing, and that is, when God commands, all ought to obey, let them be parents or children, masters or servants.

Well, Master May Milbrook did go away from his home, unknown to any one, the very night after he had said those words to me in the garden; and when everybody in the house, most likely, was asleep, he was walking across the country from Dunkenfield to the great London road, where he got up on the mail. It was about the old story, the electrifying machine, and the lie that was told when it was broken. I can't help thinking that it was time then that *that* subject had been dropped; but it hadn't. I fancy it was brought up pretty often, and that Master May's father was for ever telling him he wasn't to be believed. At any rate he said so that night. It was once too often, any way. He never said so again.

What had become of Master May, nobody could find out, any further than that he went to London on the mail coach that night. That was proved. Mr. Milbrook went to London to search for him, a few days afterwards. He wouldn't go, at first. He said he would give the headstrong boy time to think about it, and come back of his own accord. And he the more believed that he would, because it couldn't be found that Master May had taken any clothes with him, more than what he had on; and it was pretty certain that he hadn't much money in his pocket at the time he ran away.

However, he didn't come back again, nor yet write; and then, at last, his father went to look after him. But it was no use. Not a single trace of him could Mr. Milbrook find, and he came back to Dunkenfield pretty much cut up, it was said. Whether it was that he felt more love than he ever had showed; or whether he was mortified at these family affairs being known and talked about; or whether he was vexed at the boy having outwitted him; or whether he was driven to it by the sorrowful looks and earnest prayers of his lady and dear Miss Lucy, nobody could tell; but after that he didn't hold up his head as he used to do, and he let the advertisement be put in the papers.

But nothing came of that. It turned out afterwards that the boy never saw it, for instead of being in London, as most people thought, he was

far away at sea, going he didn't care where, so that it was a good long way from Dunkenfield: the farther the better, he thought. But if he had seen the advertisement, it would have been all the same, I reckon. Master May was his father's own likeness for that; he wasn't to be turned from what he had set his mind on.

There were some in the old house at Dunkenfield that pined sadly for news from poor May. There was his mother—poor lady—she was never like herself afterwards, and, what with one thing and another, she did not hold up long. Then there was Lucy. It might have melted a hardish heart to see how patiently she bore her trouble, and yet to know what a trouble it was. And then, how she used to watch for the postman day after day, and take the letters from him, and ask—so simple, and innocent, and kindly, and yet so full of meaning to one that knew her sorrow, poor thing!—"Is this all? Are you sure you haven't another for us, postman?" Ah! we all knew what that other letter was that she longed so for, and that didn't come.

It came at last, however—three months, or may be more, after her brother went away; and then they knew that he was not in England. After that, there was another long time to wait—quite a year, and rather above that, I think. But another letter *did* come; it was directed to Lucy, and stated that Master May had got into some kind of a situation in foreign parts, and was doing very well for himself. Before that time, however, other troubles had come upon the family at the old house.

Mr. Basil Milbrook—as I said before, nobody at Dunkenfield knew much about him, because he was pretty much always at school first, and then at college; but, by all accounts, he had been a timid sort of boy, and, like May, had been kept under in a harsh sort of way, when he was at home. But he had not May's spirit, and was more afraid of his father than ever May had been. I had noticed one thing, however, in Mr. Basil, when he was at home for the holidays; and that was, he was more sly than his young brother, and often urged him on to do things that Master May wouldn't have thought of doing of his own head; and then, if any blame came of it, he crept out of it in a cunning sort of way, and left poor May to shift for himself, though he was so much younger. I didn't like Mr. Basil for that.

Well, at the time of Master May's going away, Mr. Basil had been about a year at college. And close upon the heels of that great trouble, somebody or other sent word to Mr. Milbrook that Mr. Basil was going on in a random, wild sort of way. Mr. Milbrook wouldn't believe this, at first. It's likely he built upon Mr. Basil's being so fearful of him, and his having been always kept in such order and subjection when he was younger. But I reckon that the truth was, Mr. Basil was like a young colt, badly broke in. He seemed all very well and straightforward, and kept his paces, like, when he was curbed in tight; but as soon as that was loosened, he didn't know how to make use of his liberty, and started off so that nothing stopped him.

I have a notion that there wants something different from terror and strictness to make steady, persevering young men, for when they break away

from that—and break away from it they will, one time or another—there's nothing else to hold them in with. I have seen this over and over again.

But about Mr. Basil: his goings on couldn't long be kept in the dark. He went on very badly indeed, by all accounts, in all manner of wildnesses, and what I should call wickednesses, and got into disgrace again and again. One day—it might be three months before the last hearing from Master May that I spoke of—Mr. Milbrook got a letter from Oxford. What was in it nobody, I believe, ever knew; I don't think even his own wife ever saw it; but, whatever it was, it drove him pretty near wild.

I was that day working in the pleasure-grounds near the house, and I saw the poor gentleman come out, bare-headed, stamping along and looking awful, as he always did when he was very angry—his lips purple white, and a dark-red, angry flush over his face; and, though it was a coldish day, the perspiration stood in great drops on his forehead.

"Tom," he said, in his sharp, stern way; but, for all that, I could hear the words trembling, as they came out, quick upon one another—"Tom, run directly to —," (the name of the town does not matter: it was the nearest town to Dunkenfield) —"run as fast as you can, and order up a post-chaise directly, with four horses—do you hear? But stop—saddle the pony, and ride over; you'll be there all the sooner." And in he went again, without another word.

I did as I was told, of course, and didn't let the grass grow under the pony's feet as we went along; but still I got blamed for being gone so long. However, the post-chaise was up at the old house in quick time, and off it went again with Mr. Milbrook in it. Nobody knew at that time where he was gone, not even Miss Lucy and her mother. If anybody had known it, it would have been Miss Lucy; for she had a way with her father that nobody else had; and he used to lean upon her, like—more perhaps than he would have cared to own. But even she did not know where her father was gone, only that he should not be back for three or four days, perhaps.

About a mile from the old house at Dunkenfield is a small farm-house and farm, that went, at that time, along with the estate. Mr. Milbrook farmed it himself, and had a decent sort of a working man living in the farm-house, as bailiff. Well, three days after Mr. Milbrook went away so suddenly, he came back again to Dunkenfield in the same post-chaise; but instead of going straight home, he turned off to his farm and stopped there. He wasn't alone, for Mr. Basil was with him; and they that saw the young man then, said he looked exceedingly sullen.

"Martin," said Mr. Milbrook to his bailiff, when he and Mr. Basil had got out of the chaise, and the man had been sent for all in a hurry, "this young man is to live with you. Tell your wife to get a bed-room ready for him; and whatever she wants to make it comfortable, I'll send down to you from the house." A good deal more passed than this, of course; but the end of it was—that was to be Mr. Basil's home; and his luggage was taken in.

All that time the young man hadn't said a word, good or bad; but when his father got into the

chaise, to go up to the old house, Mr. Basil broke silence:—

"Am I not to see my mother and Lucy, then, father?"

All he got in answer was a stern, angry, "No!" and the chaise drove off.

Such a thing as this couldn't happen in such a place as Dunkenfield without being talked about; and it wasn't long before it was said that Mr. Basil had been turned away from college. And that was the truth. He had been warned, it seems, again and again, and threatened, till something or other came to light that finished the matter off at once. And when Mr. Milbrook heard of the disgrace, and went to see about it, he found things so bad, that there were no bounds to his anger. The young man was dreadfully in debt, too. How many hundred pounds Mr. Milbrook had to pay was never known to anybody but himself; but by all accounts 'twas a good many. And there were some debts so disgraceful, that he said he never would pay them, and he never did.

That Mr. Basil had been very wrong, and given way to temptation of almost all sorts, there is not a doubt. The truth is, he was not fit to be left so much to himself; and, according to all that I have heard, there were plenty of wicked tempters in Oxford at that time, who got rich by drawing on young men that seemed to have more money than wit and that had good connexions, from one thing to another, till they were ruined in character, if not in purse too, and had brought disgrace on them and theirs. That's how it was with Mr. Basil.

This was a terrible blow to poor Mrs. Milbrook and Miss Lucy, when they heard of it—and hear of it they did when Mr. Milbrook got home. It was stroke upon stroke to them. They begged hard, both of them, to have Mr. Basil at home, or, at least, to be allowed to see him. But Mr. Milbrook wouldn't have it so. He forbade their going near the farm; and he dared Mr. Basil to show his face at home, or leave the farm without permission. If he did, he said, he need never look for anything from him in life, or after death. And Mr. Milbrook was a man that knew how to keep his word.

Dear Miss Lucy! these troubles tried her sorely. But she went about quiet and peaceful. The more she was tried, I think, the more kind and loving, and ready to comfort others, she used to be. But the poor lady, her mother, couldn't bear up at all. She shut herself up for days and weeks, and wouldn't see anybody, except just her own husband and Miss Lucy, and one or two servants. At last, her health quite gave way. I have heard tell of broken hearts. I think if there ever was a broken heart, Mrs. Milbrook's was one.

As to Mr. Basil, he kept close in-doors at the farm, seldom going out at the door, except to work now and then a short spell in the garden. When the people at Dunkenfield first heard of his being brought there in the way he was, they settled it in their own minds that it wouldn't be long before he would run away as his brother had done. But this didn't happen.

I don't think that anybody knew how ill Mrs. Milbrook was at this time. I can't think that her husband knew it, or he could not have held out so sternly about Mr. Basil not seeing her. But so it

was; and when Master May's letter came, the poor mother was too ill to leave her room. For a little while, she seemed to gain strength from the news it brought; but it did not last long; and though, so far as the boy's being well when he wrote and having a good situation, the news was good, she didn't leave off fretting about him—so young, and so far off, with nobody to care for him. But perhaps, after all, her worst trial was about Mr. Basil. It was soon to have an end, however; sooner than anybody expected. She was suddenly taken worse, and one doctor after another was sent for. It was a sort of fit that Mrs. Milbrook fell into, and wasn't sensible for a good many hours. But even then, according to all accounts, Mr. Milbrook wouldn't believe there was any real danger. The doctors told him there wasn't any *immediate* danger; and he did not understand by that, that they did not hold out any hopes of her living many weeks.

At last, however, he saw how it was; and then he was near upon going distracted. He would have done anything, or given anything, I really believe, to save her life.

He said something like this to Miss Lucy, one day, when they were together: they were in the garden. Miss Lucy had been up all night, watching by her mother's bed, and had just gone out for a breath of air; and her father followed her. It happened that I was not a great way from them, and I couldn't help partly hearing what he said.

I couldn't tell what Miss Lucy said—I had no business to listen, and I did not—but I could hear her heavy sobs; and then I heard her father say: "It shall be so, then: I leave it with you, Lucy. Do what you please about it; only, mind, I cannot see him."

It wasn't many minutes after this that Miss Lucy brought a little note to me, and asked me, in her kind way, to run with it as quickly as I could to the farm. The note was directed to Mr. Basil. It was not long that I was going; and that day Mr. Basil came into the old house for the first time for many a long month. It was in a private sort of way that he came: but that's of no consequence.

He saw his mother a few hours before she died; and, by all accounts, it was a very sorrowful meeting; but even at that dying bed, Mr. Milbrook would not see his son.

I needn't tell about the funeral that followed. Mr. Basil and his father met then for the first time since they had travelled together from Oxford. I fancy there was a sort of reconciliation, for Mr. Basil left the farm, and came back to the old house; and a little while afterwards, he went away from Dunkenfield. His father got him into some office in London. But Mr. Basil did not hold it long. He didn't live many years after; but I never heard any particulars.

There is a grand monument in the churchyard at Dunkenfield that was put up to the memory of Mrs. Milbrook, over the vault in which she was buried. It cost a deal of money, they say. There were other names put on it afterwards. Mr. Basil's was the first, though he was not brought to Dunkenfield to be buried; and the next was old Mr. Milbrook.

There was a great alteration in Mr. Milbrook

after his lady died; that is, as long as he lived in the old house, which was not a great while. He got to hate the place, I believe, and had it put up for sale; but it wasn't sold, for it wasn't a likely place for anybody to buy. At last, after a year or two, he went away, and Miss Lucy with him, leaving only a servant or two to keep things together. After another year or two, the furniture was taken away, and the house was altogether shut up. There was a board put upon it, saying the house was "to be let;" but it stood empty a longish while.

Everybody in Dunkenfield was sorry when it was known that the Milbrooks were quite gone away; for, with all his sternness, Mr. Milbrook was not a bad master to them that worked for him out-of-doors. It was in-doors that he was liked least. He was generous, too, to any one in want or sickness. But it was Miss Lucy that was most missed and most mourned for. The old folks and the little children in the village cried when they knew they shouldn't see her any more. And, for the matter of that, there were some, I guess, that were neither old folks nor little children that cried too, though, maybe, they did not let it be known.

It was fifteen years, or thereabouts, after the Milbrook family had quite left the old house at Dunkenfield, that the bell was set a-tolling, and the Milbrook vault was opened. It was a fine summer's day when, towards evening, a hearse and a mourning coach came into the village. It was old Mr. Milbrook's funeral. A good many people gathered in the churchyard out of curiosity; but there were not many of them that knew much about him that was to be put into the vault. I was one, however, of them that did remember him; and if I mixed with the crowd, it was more than curiosity that drew me there. I looked to see who it was got out of the coach to follow the coffin into the church. It was a dark-looking, thin-faced gentleman, with a goodish many gray hairs mixed with black ones. Any one that hadn't known him a boy, would have taken him to be forty years old at least, maybe more. If it hadn't been for the glance of his eye, I shouldn't have known him; but I did know him—it was Master May; and I knew, too, that he wasn't so old as me by six or seven years, and I wasn't over forty then.

After the funeral was over, he went away in the coach. I was disappointed at this. I wanted to get a word or two from him, and to ask after Miss Lucy; and I was quite sorry to think I shouldn't see him again. But I did see him again. The next day he came back to Dunkenfield to give orders about the monument, and to see about the estate which had come to him; and then he found me out, and came to my cottage. He hadn't forgotten me, it seemed, and perhaps I was a little bit vain of that.

Well, we talked about old times; and he told me about Miss Lucy—how that she was married, and had a nice happy family about her (I could believe that easily enough, she was just the one to make a husband and children happy), and that she and they were then abroad, travelling in foreign lands. He told me, too, a little about himself; how he had been abroad a good many years—till after Mr. Basil died—and that then he came home because his father sent for him. He said, too, that

nothing pained him more than the thought of how he had acted in going away as he did, and that the feeling of having shortened his mother's life often made his own bitter to him; and that he was justly punished for his headstrong course by not being permitted to see his mother again.

I ventured to ask him, was he married?

He shook his head, as much as to say No; and he didn't say any more.

Wouldn't he come back to Dunkensfield and live in the old house? It was let, to be sure, but if that family went away when the lease was out, wouldn't he come back?

"No, no; there are too many sorrowful remembrances," he said.

He asked me kindly about my little affairs and my family—I had been married some years then—and was glad to find me so comfortable. Could I spare an hour just to walk through the old gardens? for I was head gardener at the old house. To be sure I could, and I did; but it was distressing to see how sad and grieved he looked as we went on.

At last he turned away, quick like: "I can't bear it, Tom," he said; "let us get away."

Before he left Dunkensfield that day, Mr. May Milbrook talked a goodish bit to my young ones, and told them, as they valued God's blessing and their own happiness, never to grieve their parents by being headstrong and self-willed. There were tears in his eyes as he spoke, and I am sure there were in mine. But it didn't end there. He walked a little time with me in my own garden; and, said he, "What I have said to your children, Tom, I meant as well as said. But there are two sides to a question; and now I say to you, in the words of the bible—I hope you read the bible, Tom—'Provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.' Remember, Tom, that one wrong generally brings about another wrong; and that two wrongs can never make one right."

A FROST PIECE—ST. JAMES'S PARK.

It is a day of hard frost, about the middle of February, and the hour is near noon; in the country the air would be clear, with the exception of the few drifting snow-flakes which the east wind drives in fantastic courses ere they settle on the ground; but in London, though there is no fog, the smoke refuses to rise far above the level of the house-tops; and, congealed by the breath of winter, wraps every distant object in a semi-transparent curtain. We happen to be out for a ramble in the neighbourhood of Charing-cross, and gathering from certain unmistakable indications, in the shape of new skates curiously crossed with virgin straps, and dangling from the hands of gentlemen about town, that the ice in St. James's Park will bear, we take a short cut through Spring-gardens, and in a few minutes are standing upon the banks of the "ornamental water," a spectator of the winter sport of the Londoner. The park presents a singular picture, not wanting in features of grandeur and beauty, but having these somewhat comically contrasted with human peculiarities and oddities. The noble trees, stretching aloft their myriads of tiny hands to catch the falling snow-flakes, stand vividly depicted in all their naked beauty against

the leaden sky; or farther on, half veiled in the wintry mist, show like imploring spectres in the act of vanishing from mortal vision. Away on the right, the Queen's palace looms dimly in the white haze, bearing the unsubstantial aspect of a monster erection of thin grey and translucent tissue-paper, which a bird might pierce in its flight, or a breath might dissipate. The few houses that are visible through the heavy atmosphere are magnified to an abnormal size, and look like the shadowy structures of a by-gone time, or the colossal edifices eclipsed in the gloom of some of Martin's pictures. As we look around, the clock of the Horse-guards rings out the hour of noon, in notes so loud, clear, and close to the ear, that we are startled into the recognition of that national establishment, which, for all we can see of it, might be a hundred miles away.

We find the banks of the lake thronged with spectators of both sexes, and all ages and classes; among which, however, greatly predominate the boys and the hobbledohs, who make up so important a part of the London population. They are the first in every crowd, for whatever purpose it may assemble; and the first in every dangerous exploit, whether anything is to be got by it or not. Their presence on this occasion may serve to explain certain phenomena observable upon the banks and upon the frozen surface of the water. It is for their especial enlightenment that the poles surmounted with a board marked "dangerous" are set up—an admonition which, notwithstanding, they never take in good part. They invariably prefer testing the ice themselves, by walking on to it, or under it, as may happen: and it is for the sake of checking this precocious spirit of experiment, that the edge of the ice all round the lake has been broken every morning since the frost set in, by men appointed for the purpose; and hence it is that now, when it *will* bear, bridges of plank have to be laid down that they may get on and off. You may observe, likewise, that ropes are laid across the ice from one bank to the other, in readiness to be drawn instantly to any part that may give way. The surface of the ice looks anything but tempting to a person not enamoured of its glittering aspect. It is starred with huge cracks, stretching sheer across the basin, and in some parts is flooded with water, welling up from broad holes; but in spite of that, it is crowded with occupants eager in the pursuit of pleasure or of business, and all making the most of the few short hours of light afforded by the winter's day. Our parti-coloured friends and familiars, the poor ducks, geese, didappers, and foreign fowls of all sorts, not forgetting those *rare aves*, the black swans, have got the worst of it just now: their impudence is completely frozen out of them, and to all appearance, their animosity too; for there they are yonder, all confined to one small pool broke for them by the humanity of the lodge-keeper, and wagging their variegated and thickly-feathered tails. Hard weather has taught them good behaviour, and misfortune, as it often does, has reconciled their feuds, and shown them that it may be politic to be birds of one family even though they are not of one feather.

While admiring the graceful evolutions of some of the practical skaters, who seem to fly on the

wings of the wind, and to be guided by the action of the will rather than the force of muscular exercise, we cannot help being struck with what appears to us a most undesirable change in the fashion of skating affected in the present day. When the young Benjamin West exhibited his Adonis-like form upon the Serpentine to the supreme admiration of our grandmothers, we are very sure that he had too true and fine a sense of the graceful to be seen for a moment in the attitude which *now* is esteemed the perfection of the accomplishment. Every skater now-a-days who has learned to feel his feet upon the ice, aspires apparently to emulate the motion of the crab, and esteems it the climax of the art to be able to skate backwards, twisting his neck in such a way as to enable him to see behind him. Think of a man travelling five or six hundred yards in the act of sitting down, and alternately grinning over either shoulder lest he should come in contact with another performing the same preposterous feat! We turn from such an exhibition to yonder gentlemanly sample of the old school: he has employed a man to sweep a small space clear for him, not more than a dozen feet square, and on that he occupies himself in cutting various small figures, all evidently devised originally to afford at once healthful exercise to the body and graceful postures for the limbs. He is a veteran in the art, and his motions are as easy as those of a gold-fish in a glass globe.

While we are enjoying his gratuitous display, it is suddenly interrupted by the apparition of a young gentleman from Westminster, who being this morning screwed to a pair of skates for the first time, on which he is only able to support himself by the aid of a couple of stout walking sticks, is obliged to go wherever they choose to take him; and when they cannot agree upon that point, which, as he has a habit of turning out his toes, they never do long together, is obliged to come sprawling to the ground. There he goes again, with a flump! that's the twentieth time that his heels have been on a level with his head this morning; but no matter, he is picked up again in a twinkling by a brace of stipendiary sweepers, who have charge of him; and he swims, straddles, staggers, and sprawls off again. Here comes a costermonger who has been out crying "live soles" ever since he left Billingsgate at six o'clock, before it was light. He invested sixpence in a pair of broken skates last night, and having levied the straps from his donkey-harness, is come to disport himself with the gentry for an hour or two. Yonder are a couple of mannikins, who having equal rights in a single pair of skates, and not being able to agree as to priority of claim, have divided the object of dispute and taken one each: they tumble about in emulation of each other; and the first who shall tire of the pummeling he gets, will surrender to the other the instrument of torture. Here comes, bareheaded to the weather, without a shirt to his back, and only a couple of shreds of shoes to his feet, a characteristic specimen of the nomadic population of London's vilest districts. Poor Josh the cadger, though his stomach is empty as his back is bare, and though he has neither skates to skate with, nor soles to his shoes to slide with, yet loves the ice with the instinct of his race, and must take his pleasure upon

it. A lump of ice is all the apparatus he demands, and with one foot, whose red toes peep out from the worn-out shoe, fixed firmly upon that, he propels himself forward with the other, shouting with the pleasurable excitement, and as insensible to the sharp arrows of the east wind as he is, alas! to the duties and obligations of a life whose tenth winter finds him proof against all outward assaults.

The sliders form bands altogether distinct from the skaters; but among these there are almost as many degrees of skill to be found. Happy is he whose feet are shod with round protruding nails, upon which he may glide for a hundred yards erect as a grenadier; but happier, apparently, is he who can do the whole distance on one leg, keeping the other for emergencies. The sliding is generally productive of more amusement for spectators than the skating. Tumbles, however, are more frequent, because if one falls, all who come after are pretty sure to fall over him, and hence much mirth, and not unfrequently serious accident, ensues. Of course the most curious part of the exhibition is the awkward attempts of beginners—the desperate resources of poverty to get mounted on skates—the tortures which ambitious tyros submit to ere they find their feet—and the unexpected mishaps which, in a crowd of persons all engaged in individual measures of a very active kind, are continually occurring.

But on London ice there is a social phenomenon observable of much greater interest than these trifles—and that is the *business* part of the affair. Wherever in London pleasure is sought, there business waits upon the seekers, and even though there be but a chance of turning a penny, the chance is not thrown away, and the penny is turned if possible. Hence we have here, on the ice in St. James's Park, professionals of various kinds doing a trade and earning small gains under circumstances in which a provincial would hardly think of gain at all. First, here is the skate-jobber: he has brought a long bench, upon which he displays a score or two of pairs of skates, of various value, and which he hires out by the hour, at a charge of from fourpence to a shilling. He screws them into your wellingtons, and straps them on to your feet, and when you have deposited their value with him, not for fear that you, being a gentleman, should run away with them, but merely to insure himself from the accident of your getting under the ice, in which case your executors might demur to his claim; then, having the cash in hand, he leaves you to glide at your pleasure wherever you choose. He makes hay, not when the sun shines, but when the east wind blows and the snow falls; and as he nets a few pounds in a good day, he would soon make a competence were the winters as durable here as they are in Holland. Next to the skate-jobber is the poor but handy fellow, who, having no capital, is proprietor of a chair or two and a gimlet, and who is glad to earn twopence by fastening on the skates of gentlemen who provide their own. When you have paid your twopence you are free of his chair, and may rest upon it whenever it is unoccupied and you are so disposed. Then come the sweepers; these are numerous, and if much snow be falling they have no insecurity: they sweep up the snow in a central mound, round which the skaters keep up a constant race: the contributions

they levy are perfectly voluntary; but their services are of too much value to pass unrewarded. Even if there be no snow, the ice becomes in a short time so cut up by the skaters as to render their brooms indispensable. They are a numerous fraternity, and each one of them has abandoned a crossing in some public thoroughfare, to enjoy the combination of pleasure and business upon the frozen surface of the water. Next comes the strap-merchant: he is fringed around with dangling thongs of leather terminating in metal buckles, and his appearance is especially welcome to the proprietor of an old mildewed pair of skates, which, having been thrown by without cleaning after last winter's usage, will not submit to be buckled on without some portion at least of new harness. His stock-in trade brings him a thumping profit, because he charges in a ratio settled by the necessities of the purchaser rather than by the cost of production. His wares have a very suspicious resemblance to garters, under which denomination, in all likelihood, he retails them upon *terra firma*. And now a cheerful voice rings out in the frosty air, "Brandy-balls—balls—balls! Here you are! Brandy-balls, four a penny! Hot spiced gingerbread—the real sort—hot as fire!" This orator, who is an old soldier, is the dispenser of the only sort of refreshment to be obtained on the ice; and he is a contraband dealer who has smuggled his goods into the park, where no traffic is allowed, though in the present instance it is not thought worth while to interfere with him. His "brandy-balls" are a kind of globular sweetmeats, totally innocent of alcohol, which is represented by an extra dose of peppermint and perhaps a flavour of cayenne; and his hot spiced nuts are a species of gingerbread, in the composition of which the ginger is out of all proportion with the bread—a single mouthful being enough to inflame your palate for the rest of the day. So soon as he makes his appearance, the lads flock round him with their pence, but a warning crack of the ice beneath their united weight scatters them like chaff, and, the old soldier first setting the example, there is a general run upon the bank, where he can do business in security, and soon disposes of the contents of his tray.

By this time the surface of the ice is crowded to an extent altogether incompatible with the safety of the multitude, and hundreds more are hurrying to get on. The long slides are covered with straddling figures from one end to the other, and the skaters have gradually formed into an endless chain, which wheels round the whole area of the lake, at a few yards from the shore. The spectacle, though animated enough, is not very pleasant to look upon. The tent of the Royal Humane Society, where all the appliances for restoring suspended animation are ready for immediate use, suggests unpleasant associations. Numbers of the society's men perambulate the banks ready for an emergency, which it is but too plain they are anticipating. Beneath the pressure of perhaps nine or ten thousand persons darting rapidly about in every direction, the surface of the ice bends and waves and undulates like the gentle swell of a summer sea. Suddenly an awful noise, comparable to no other natural sound that we know of, proclaims that the impending calamity has taken place; it produces a general panic, during which there is a

simultaneous rush to the shore, and the tumult on the ice is at an end, while all rush eagerly to that part of the ground which commands the nearest view of the disaster. On turning our eyes in that direction, we are aware that a large section of the ice has given way, and that from ten to twenty individuals, submerged up to their necks, are holding on to its sharp edges to keep themselves from sinking. One of them has a friend skating near him, and who makes an effort to rescue him. First he plucks the silken tie from his neck, and coming as near as he dares, tries to throw it within reach of his friend; but the wind is against him, and blows it away. Then he tears off one of his skates, fastens that to the neckerchief, and swings it within the grasp of the imperilled lad; now, with a long and steady pull, he strives to hoist him out, and has nearly succeeded when the frail silk breaks, and the poor fellow sinking over head and ears with a plunge is lost to view. But he rises again, shaking his head like a water-dog, and repeats the experiment: again it fails, and again he falls back into the icy flood. The third time, while, amid the encouraging cheers of the spectators, he is on the point of succeeding, the ice upon which his friend is standing gives way, and the two friends, now both submerged together, present their rueful faces over the edge of the ice, and beckon for assistance from shore. While this has been going on, some few have already been extricated by means of ropes prudently laid across the ice in expectation of a demand for them. But now the society's boat, a light, broad, flat-bottomed tub, is seen rapidly advancing in the distance, propelled by a man who runs in its rear. Now it crashes over the edge of the ice, as the man who has it in charge throws himself into it, and it is floating buoyantly in the midst of the drowning skaters. In two or three minutes they are all lugged safe on board, and the boat, now heavily freighted, is pulled by ropes to the shore, splintering the ice like glass in its passage, and cheered by cries of "Bravo!" and the clapping of twenty thousand palms that line the banks, as though the whole thing were a dramatic spectacle got up for the public amusement; occasionally, however, the drama is turned into a tragedy, and the unhappy skater sinks before the eyes of the multitude to rise no more in life.

The half-drowned patients become inmates of the Royal Humane Society's tent, where those that require it are put into a hot bath, and otherwise medicated until they are in a fit condition to be delivered over to their friends. A dose of extra strong stimulants enables a man of good constitution, who has not been long submerged, to walk home and take care of himself; while it not unfrequently happens that another who escaped drowning through the timely aid of the society shall die from the results of the accident ere the leaves are upon the trees. The number of persons thus rescued from almost certain death during the frosts of a long winter by the instrumentality of this society alone, is something almost incredible. We have ourselves seen from thirty to forty pulled out in one day. The unlettered cockney looks upon all this as a matter of course; he seems to think that he has an undisputed right to risk his life if he choose, and that the Royal Humane Society "have a right" to save it if they can, as a matter of busi-

ness, and that accounts are square between them. Strange it seems that men so acute on other points should be so foolishly rash in this.

One would think that the moral effect of such an event as we have above described would be to deter the spectators of it from incurring such a risk in their own persons: and so it is, for five or perhaps ten minutes—but not much longer. Hardly a quarter of an hour has elapsed since the rescue of their companions, and again the fascination of the ice has lured its votaries to the much-loved sport. As the day wanes the cold intensifies—the sloppy surface becomes frozen hard, and with this favouring circumstance, the sport goes on with greater vivacity than ever. It must, however, cease with the darkness, which closes in rapidly. The sweepers are the first to disappear; there is no longer any chance of coppers, and the poor fellows have been so long fasting, that they will be glad to exchange the few they have picked up for something substantial in the shape of a meal. The skate-jobber, who is threshing his own shoulders to keep them warm, must stay till his last customer is satisfied, which may not be till the lag-guards are warned off by the gate-keepers, when, as the park has to be closed for the night, all must clear out. The sharp wind has cleared the evening sky of clouds; the moon in her second quarter gleams palely aloft; and the amateurs of skating, as they button up their great-coats, and turn up the collars about their ears, hug themselves with the agreeable conviction that “it will be a pelting hard frost to-night, and the ice will be as hard as brass to-morrow.”

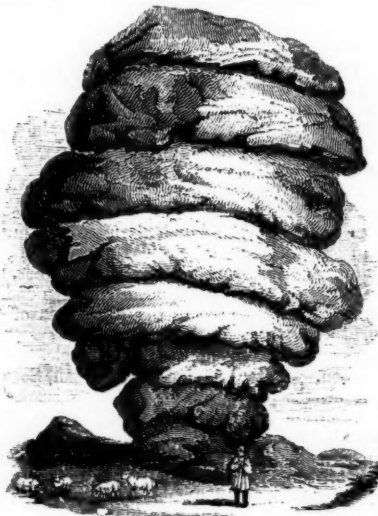
Scenes like the above, with winters such as we have of late years had, do not now often occur in London. Pleasant and healthy as the recreation of skating is, it is greatly to be regretted that in the metropolis it should so often be attended with the loss of life. The suggestion has been frequently made, and, if practicable, would be invaluable, that in winter the waters in our parks should be drained to a point which would prevent the risk of serious casualties. We have too vivid a recollection of seeing a youth perish in St. James's Park before our eyes, not to drop a word of caution to our young readers against venturing on the ice, until its bearing capabilities are ascertained beyond a doubt.

PSEUDO-DRUIDICAL ROCKS.

MANY structures exist in England manifestly of Druidical origin, such as the unhewn rocks of Stonehenge, Abury, etc. But scattered up and down are many stones of singular form and position, which have been called Druidical from the difficulty felt by the observers to account for them in any other manner, yet which prove to be, when examined, referrible only to natural laws. Some such will be here mentioned; and no doubt many of our readers will be familiar with others which might be added to their number.

A few miles from Liskeard, in Cornwall, on one of the great moors which distinguish that part of the British dominions, stand several remarkable objects, among which some, as being undoubtedly of Druidical origin, we shall pass by, in order to

notice a remarkable pile of granite rocks occupying the summit of a steep hill, and known by the name of “the Cheese-wring,” from its supposed resemblance to a cheese-press. The visitor who looks upon it, if he possess any imagination of a certain kind, can readily suppose gaping jaws and fishes’ heads in the stones of the structure, and such marvels readily impose on the ignorant and unwary. But as one looks on the seven stones, some of them of enormous weight, which compose this singular edifice, nineteen feet high, it is not easy to form a reasonable conjecture how they came there, bearing such an undue weight at their top, yet so accurately adjusted as to brave the highest winds that can blow across that unsheltered moor. No one of course can tell with certainty how the “Cheese-wring” came into its present position. One conjecture is, that these stones were originally thrown one upon another by the force of the earthquake or earthquakes which scattered the rocks around them, and that they were at first embedded in earth. The rains, however, which prevail to so great an extent in Cornwall, have gradually washed away the soil from their sides, and, as they happened to balance themselves so firmly as still to maintain their centre of gravity, they have been left upstanding, a remarkable beacon in their vicinity. Dr. McCulloch’s opinion is, however, that the Cheese-wring is only part of a much larger heap of granite which has been gradually disintegrated by the action of the atmosphere and the natural tendency of the rock to split into fissures. As the stones in question happened to have the centre of gravity precisely in the perpendicular of the whole, they have retained their singular position, whilst neighbouring masses, wanting that condition, have been totally overthrown.



THE CHEESE-WRING.

A similar natural curiosity exists in the West Riding of Yorkshire, not far from Harrogate, and constitutes one of the attractions of that popular watering-place. On a wild hilly moor, some great convulsion of nature, at a distant period, has scat-

tered rocks of immense magnitude like nine-pins, strewing them in the wildest disorder over a large tract of land. As these masses of stone are composed of successive layers of mill-stone grit, some of which are softer than others, and therefore more liable to be affected by the action of the atmosphere, the decay of these parts, whilst others remain entire, exhibits many singular phenomena. One of these masses, termed the Idol rock, from the erroneous supposition that it was erected by the ancient Druids, is here given. The circumference of the upper part is 46 feet and the height above 20, the whole resting upon a stem of only one foot in diameter.

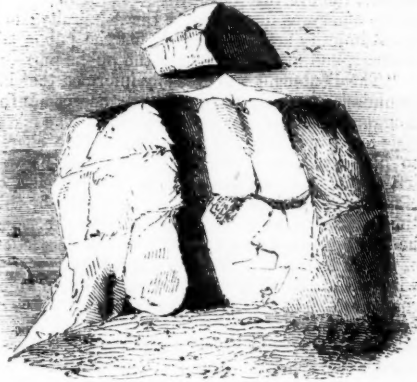


THE IDOL ROCK.

The same scene—Brimham Rocks, as it is called—exhibits that natural phenomena, a rocking-stone, resolvable into the same general explanation as the former. Whether ancient idolatry may have availed itself of these wonders to mystify the minds of the common people, cannot now be ascertained, but such a fact is extremely probable. It is easy to conceive how the lower part of the mass in the last engraving, if the upper part were thrown off, might, with a little more corrosion to destroy its pedestal, be converted into a rocking-stone, easily moveable by the application of some force, yet still maintaining its perpendicular position. Two such rocks are close by, calculated to weigh a hundred tons each, and which are yet capable of being moved by the hand with perfect ease.

The most remarkable rock of this kind, called Logging or Loggan stone, is near the Land's End in Cornwall, situated on a peninsula of granite. The stone is poised upon a pyramid of rock, very near the edge of the precipice, down which it seems to threaten, every instant, to fall. A very small force, or even a strong wind, will put this stone, though computed to weigh upwards of 80 tons, into a state of vibration, which continues for some minutes. The common report is, that, after the occurrence we are about to relate, it has never vibrated so well as formerly. The narrative we present to the reader, though the facts are not

new, is extracted from a lively book called "Rambles beyond Railways:"—



THE LOGGAN STONE.

"In the year 1824, a certain lieutenant in the royal navy, then in command of a cutter stationed off the southern coast of Cornwall, was told of an ancient Cornish prophecy, that no human power should ever succeed in overturning the Loggan stone. No sooner was the prediction communicated to him than he conceived a morbid and mischievous ambition to falsify practically an assertion which the commonest common-sense might have informed him had sprung from nothing but popular error and popular superstition. Accompanied by a body of picked men from his crew, he ascended to the Loggan stone, ordered several levers to be placed under it at one point, gave the word to "heave," and the next moment had the miserable satisfaction of seeing one of the most remarkable natural curiosities in the world utterly destroyed, for aught he could foresee to the contrary, under his own directions!

"But fortune befriended the Loggan stone. One edge of it rolled over, and became fixed by a lucky chance in a crevice in the rocks immediately below the granite slab from which it had been started. Had this not happened, it must have fallen over a sheer precipice, and been lost in the sea. By another accident, equally fortunate, two labouring men, at work in the neighbouring place, were led by curiosity secretly to follow the lieutenant and his myrmidons up to the stone. Having witnessed, from a secure hiding-place, all that occurred, the two workmen, with great propriety, immediately hastened off to inform the lord of the manor of the wanton act of destruction that they had seen perpetrated.

"The news was soon communicated throughout the district, and thence throughout all Cornwall. The indignation of the whole country was aroused. Antiquaries who believed the Loggan stone to have been balanced by the Druids; philosophers who held that it was produced by an eccentricity of natural formation; ignorant people who cared nothing about Druids or natural formations, but who liked to climb up and rock the stone whenever

they passed near it; tribes of guides who lived by showing it; innkeepers in the neighbourhood, to whom it brought customers by hundreds; tourists of every degree, who were on their way to see it—all joined in one general clamour of execration against the overthrower of the rock. A full report of the affair was forwarded to the Admiralty; and the Admiralty acted vigorously for the public advantage, and mercifully spared the public purse.

"The lieutenant was officially informed that his commission was in danger unless he set up the Loggan stone again in its proper place. The materials for compassing this achievement were offered to him gratis from the dockyards; but he was left to his own resources to defray the expense of employing workmen to help him. Being by this time awakened to a proper sense of the mischief he had done, and to a tolerably strong conviction of the disagreeable position in which he was placed with the Admiralty, he addressed himself vigorously to the task of repairing his fault. Strong beams were planted about the Loggan stone, chains were passed round it, pulleys were rigged, and capstans were manned. After a week's hard work and brave perseverance on the part of every one employed in the labour, the rock was pulled back into its former position, but not into its former perfection of balance; it has never moved since as freely as it moved before.

"It is only fair to the lieutenant, to add to the narrative of his mischievous frolic, the fact that he, though a poor man, defrayed all the heavy expenses of replacing the rock. Just before his death he paid the last remaining debt, and paid it with interest."

We must not omit to mention the rocks, very similar to the Loggans, which are called in Cornwall Tolmen—Tolmen meaning a mass of rock poised upon two separated summits. In the parish of Constantine, a large mass, computed to weigh upwards of 750 tons, is found thus resting upon two points of subjacent granite. In the same county are found the Kilmarth rocks, one of which, like the Leaning Tower of Pisa, stands more than twelve feet out of the perpendicular, though, having its centre of gravity within the base, it is perfectly solid. Though art cannot certainly have caused many of these phenomena, it may have done something, by removing obstructions, to heighten their effect and to increase their wonderfulness.

Many natural phenomena of a similar kind are to be found in various parts of the British empire. The natural rocks in Derbyshire, especially those of Dovedale, and the singular castellated appearances which crown the hills overlooking the banks of the Wye in Worcestershire, will readily occur to the traveller. They present the appearance of art, though they are simply the effect of physical causes. It is only possible to account for some of them by reference to volcanic agencies upheaving at some distant period the solid contents of the globe beneath us.

It is, after all, a poor philosophy which seeks to resolve all apparently inexplicable phenomena into the artificial. Though the laws, as we call them, of nature, are few and simple, they are susceptible of endless varieties of application beyond all ordinary conception. By their wonders the human mind is at once humbled and stimulated.

Happy are they who can behold fingers pointing to the skies not only in those edifices especially dedicated to God's worship, but also, though not equally, in all the marvels which proclaim the Almighty's "eternal power and godhead."

BIRMINGHAM AND HER MANUFACTURES.

XL.—CONCLUDING ARTICLE:—FIRE-ARMS AND SWORDS.

WE must now turn our attention to the subject of fire-arms, for which Birmingham has been celebrated from the time of William III, for whom a considerable number of muskets were manufactured here, at the recommendation of Sir R. Newdigate, the then member for Warwickshire. It was not, however, until the commencement of the present century that the gun trade in Birmingham assumed any great degree of importance: at the opening of the revolutionary war the British government were compelled to import fire-arms from Germany; but the resources of Birmingham were soon found to be equal to the demand of the times, and during the whole period of the war, from about 1804 to 1815, she manufactured between three and four millions of gun-barrels for government, supplying them, it is said, at the rate of 30,000 a month, or of a hundred an hour, allowing ten hours to the working day. At the peace of 1815, this enormous demand suddenly ceased, and the manufacturers had to direct their energies to a different direction: the weapons of war gave place in great measure to those used for sport and pastime—muskets to fowling-pieces, and carbines to pistols of every variety of form and size adapted for private shooting practice. The characteristic ingenuity of the Birmingham men is nowhere more apparent than in the numberless contrivances and inventions which they have brought to bear upon this deadly species of manufacture. We saw enough during our rambles through their workshops to convince us that nothing which has been done elsewhere, either in improving the form or accelerating the discharge of fire-arms, has not been done in Birmingham, and that even the much-talked-of revolvers of Colt, the American, have been anticipated and surpassed by makers in this town. It was not, however, in our power to see the whole process of gun-making, as going on in one establishment under one roof. The principle of the division of labour has perhaps been found practically to answer better. Be this as it may, though guns, pistols, and rifles appear to be far more plentiful than books in Birmingham, we were forced to collect our information on the subject from various quarters, and were not indebted to any one firm in particular for the little knowledge we contrived to glean. In strolling through the town, the stranger meets guns and fractions of guns continually walking about the streets: here a boy is seen with a dozen roughly-filed barrels on his shoulders, marching them down to the proof-house; here comes another bringing as many back, and carrying the fragments of a burst barrel in his hand; here is a young fellow with a handsome veined walnut stock, which he has been carving and polishing up to the mark for his employer; and

here is an elderly woman staggering along and hugging a huge faggot of musket stocks just sawn to a rough shape, which her good man at home has to rasp into symmetry for the grasp, perhaps, of the new militia. Such outward and visible demonstrations as these give token of the existence of a lively trade in guns; the manufacture of which we will now briefly describe as intelligibly as may be, as we happened to witness it at various places.

The most important part of a gun, we need hardly say, is the barrel, since upon the proper construction of that depends both its efficiency as a weapon and its safety to the user. The great object in the formation of the barrel is to produce the utmost strength with the smallest amount of metal, the triumph of the gun-maker being the production of a light gun which it shall be perfectly safe to fire. To accomplish this, no end of expedients have been resorted to and experiments tried. The Spanish makers at one period were accustomed to reduce, by force of hammering upon an anvil, a mass of iron weighing forty or fifty pounds, to the weight of a common fowling-piece, and barrels thus made realized as much as fifty pounds each. Experience has shown, however, that such an expenditure of labour and material is not necessary, and British barrels made by the process we witnessed have been proved to be no whit inferior to the best ever brought from Spain. The barrel is made somewhat in the following manner. A number of small scraps of best iron, consisting of old nails (horse-shoe nails are most preferred), cuttings and shreds of old iron, are piled together and placed in the fire, where, by the action of fierce heat, they are brought almost to the melting point, and adhere loosely to each other; a portion of this metal is then withdrawn and forged into the form of a thin bar of considerable length, and diminishing in thickness towards the end. This bar is to form the barrel, the thin end of it to be the muzzle, and the thick end the breech. A mandril or rod of hard metal is now chosen, proportioned to the bore of the barrel to be made; round this the metal, being first heated until it is sufficiently pliable, is wound spirally, the edges overlaying each other so as to cover the mandril from view. The edges are now welded together until the twisted bar becomes a solid barrel. In this way are made guns and fowling-pieces of a comparatively low price. For barrels of a superior description, and in which an elegant surface has to be considered, stub-nails form the chief or the entire material, and the bars forged from them are very narrow, perhaps less than half an inch in width; sometimes barrels are even formed with strands of metal so small as to merit the denomination of wire-twist: they all undergo a similar process of welding.

The barrels for the common soldier's musket, and cheap fire-arms of various descriptions, although made from the best scrap-iron, are not twisted. The iron is beaten into sheets under the steam-hammer, and then cut into strips called "skelps," each of which is sufficient to make a barrel. The skelp is bent, a part at a time, round the mandril, and the overlaying edges welded together until they are firmly united.

The next step is the boring of the barrel: this is accomplished by means of a bit, which may be worked either by steam or by hand. In guns of

the best construction this is a business of much labour, as by the use of successive bits the interior of the barrel has to be polished like the surface of a mirror. Then come the breeching and percussioning of the barrel, operations which have to be done by hand, after which the barrel is reduced to shape by grinding its surface either on a grindstone or by means of files in the hand of the workman. We must now follow the barrels to the proof-house, where they are subjected to a test which is supposed to guarantee their soundness and certify their fitness for use.

The proof-house nearest at hand stands in Banbury-street. Here, no obstruction being offered to the visitor, we enter a suite of rather dingy chambers, in which numberless barrels of all lengths are stacked against the walls, waiting their turn. Passing through a room in which men are cleaning the barrels recently fired, we enter the proving-vault, where a man is arranging a long row of barrels upon the ground, preparatory to firing them. Beyond that we pass into the loading-room, where a couple of men are charging with powder and balls the tubes to be tested. We notice that muskets are charged with an ounce of gunpowder each, which is about five times the quantity generally used by the soldier; large pistols have a charge nearly as great; and into the muzzles of both a bullet a size too large for the bore is driven with a mallet, and rammed down, till it rests on the powder, with a heavy copper ramrod. Smaller pistols, such as revolvers and pocket-arms, are filled to the muzzle with as much gunpowder as they will hold, and a bullet twice as big as they will carry is forced into them by blows from the mallet. While we are watching these operations, we are suddenly lifted off the ground by the crashing report of a hundred barrels fired off in the proof-room, the identical weapons which the man was arranging as we passed through. We go to ascertain the result, and find that a couple of them have burst; and in answer to a question, are informed that the owners are entitled to the pieces, and will receive them back. The barrels being proved, are thoroughly cleansed on the premises, and then stamped with the proof-mark, and upon payment of the regular fee are returned to the owner. This severe test one would think quite sufficient to warrant the safety of any gun bearing the proof-mark; and so, in all probability, it would, were the gun transferred to the customer without any loss of metal after it left the proof-house; but the fact is, there is no security to the purchaser that this is ever done, because we saw gun-makers deliberately grinding away at the grindstone, and filing off in the vice very considerable thicknesses from barrels bearing the proof-mark. Thus the ceremony of proving is transformed, by the cupidity of the manufacturer, into a mere farce, and the government is made to guarantee the soundness of a weapon which it may be death to use. Of course we have no intention of implicating *respectable* manufacturers in such practices as these; we record only what we have seen. We are perfectly aware that the best makers, on the other hand, are not satisfied with the government test, but submit their guns to hydraulic pressure and other severe trials on their own premises before sending them into the market.

The barrels leave the proof-house generally in a rough state, and they have now to be polished: in order to this they are first reduced to a smooth surface, either by the grindstone, by filing, or by turning in a lathe—the most expensive, but by far the most efficient mode. They are browned, and the beautiful twisted, veiny surface which marks the best stub-barrels is rendered visible, by a very simple process: the workman merely wets the exterior with an acid solution—a rapid oxidation immediately takes place, revealing the spiral course of the thin strips of metal, and their junction when welded; the rust is then rubbed away with a brush formed of very small wires, and the barrel is finished off with a fine polish. As the reader may readily conceive, there is an astonishing difference in the price and the real value of gun-barrels; a musket barrel, and one perfectly safe and serviceable, may be made for the cost of a few shillings, while three times as many pounds may be paid for the barrel of a gentleman's fowling-piece. Rifle barrels are forged in a similar way with others, but they are generally thicker and heavier than the common gun; the inside of a rifle barrel being first bored to a cylinder, is then grooved in parallel grooves by means of instruments adapted for the work: this, of course, has to be done before the interior of the barrel is polished.

The stocks of guns are generally sawn from stout planks of walnut wood. It is the business of the stocker to carve the stock from the rough block to the finished productions which we see in the gunsmiths' windows. There is almost as much difference in the value of the stocks, and in the workmanship bestowed upon them, as there is in the various sorts of barrels. A first-rate workman, in forming the cavity which is to contain the lock of a first-rate gun, will not cut away a single shaving of the wood beyond what is necessary for the free action of the lock. The locks are made in great numbers in Wolverhampton; and the excellence of this part of the fabric of a British gun has never been disputed, the manufacturers of this country having achieved and maintained an acknowledged pre-eminence in this department of gun-making. In guns and fowling-pieces of the highest class, much labour and cost are incurred in the processes of ornamentation: some of the stocks are inlaid with plates of polished steel, artistically engraved with sporting subjects, such as groups of birds; and the outer surfaces of the lock, the trigger-guard, and other portions, are sometimes inlaid with devices in gold or silver. There appear to be no limits to the expense which it is possible to incur in the getting up of a single gun, as much as from three to four hundred pounds having ere now been expended upon a pet piece. The last operation in the manufacture of a gun is performed by the "putter together," whose function is sufficiently described by the name he bears.

We have already alluded to the numberless new inventions applicable to fire-arms which may be found among the gun-makers in Birmingham. Amongst the most notable of these are, perhaps, the revolving pistols, with which half a dozen shots may be fired in as many seconds; guns and pistols which require no attention to the nipple on the part of the user, but which supply themselves from reserves concealed in the butt-end of the stock;

pistols for in-door practice, which may be charged with unexampled rapidity, and which will propel a ball with fatal force without gunpowder; and fowling pieces with safety locks, which it is impossible to explode either by accident or inadvertence. We found various parties employed in the construction of the Minié rifle; and one celebrated maker who was completing a contract for 23,000 of them with the government, so that all the long shots will not be on the side of the French, if they should choose to invade us. Specimens of this weapon, which is said to kill at the distance of half a mile, were offered us for seventy shillings each, by small makers; but having no mortal enemies within that distance, we postponed the purchase to an indefinite period.

Birmingham has suffered in her gun-trade of late years from the competition of Belgium; Liege has, in fact, become the continental storehouse for fire-arms, and this is mainly owing to the fact that labour is cheaper with the Leigois than with us; and that, therefore, in the manufacture of low-priced articles in which the cost of labour forms the chief element of expense, we cannot successfully compete with them. Further, the Belgian makers are not put to the expense of *proving* their weapons, which alone would give them a considerable advantage in a market where cheapness carries the day. In point of quality and workmanship, the Belgic weapons, however, will not stand comparison with those of our own makers. It is to be regretted, that the guarantee afforded by the proof-mark is sometimes vitiated by the reprehensible practice of filing down the barrel after it is stamped. Might it not work for the prosperity of Birmingham if such a course were rendered impossible by testing and stamping barrels only after they were completely finished?

From guns to swords is a very natural transition. The manufacture of swords in Birmingham, although the weapons here produced are not to be surpassed by those from any part of the world, has had to contend with two opposing circumstances; the one is the manufacture of swords by government, the other the impractical prejudice on the part of military men for swords of foreign make: to these we might add, the economical fashion which has lately set aside the use of dress swords upon state occasions—a fashion which has seriously affected the manufacture of weapons of the ornamental class. The high character which the Birmingham sword-blades have borne for the last sixty or seventy years, was due in no small measure to the praiseworthy exertions of the late Mr. Thomas Gill, of this town. Some seventy or eighty years ago, the English sword-blades, owing to want of care or of skill in the making, had fallen into such disrepute, that no military man would willingly trust his life to a weapon of home manufacture. In this strait, the London traders in swords petitioned the treasury for leave to import German swords free of duty. Mr. Gill, hearing of this, memorialized the authorities, and requested a trial of sword-blades of his manufacture with those of Germany, challenging a comparison. In consequence of this, the East India Company divided an order for 10,000 horsemen's swords between German and English makers. Of these, Mr. Gil-

made a considerable proportion, and by his exertions a comparative trial was appointed. Every sword sent in was submitted to a machine contrived by Mr. Boulton, which tried the temper of the blade by forcing it into a considerable curve. The result was, that for every one of the Birmingham blades rejected, there were thirteen rejected from German makers; but the test was by no means favourable to the general character of English sword-blades, more than one-third of the swords sent in from other towns proving unfit for service. Besides the test above mentioned, Mr. Gill would try his swords edge-ways upon a piece of gun-barrel, which they often cut through. In a short time, the reputation of his weapons became so general, that they were in great request among continental officers.

In the manufacture of sword-blades, the first thing to be thought of is the preparation of the metal, which should be cast-steel of the very best quality, and of which some idea may be formed from the fact, that it is often valued as high as from sixty to eighty pounds a ton. Much of the steel used for this purpose is prepared in Sheffield, and comes to Birmingham in the shape of bars of sufficient length when cut in two to make a couple of sword-blades. These bars are called sword-moulds. They are wrought into the required shape at the anvil, by two workmen striking alternately; the anvil is furnished with concave ridges of steel, both straight and curved, for forming the concavities in the blade. When the blade is forged to a symmetrical shape, it is hardened by heating it in the fire until it is nearly red-hot, and then immersing it in cold water. Afterwards, it has to be tempered by passing it through the fire until it exhibits a blueish tint, and then its toughness is tested by striking its flat side forcibly on a table, and its edge upon a wooden block: if it stands this test, it is ready for grinding.

The grinding is performed on enormous grind-stones, revolving at a fearful rate under the impetus of steam. The rapid motion of these massive bodies sometimes causes them to fly asunder, when away goes a huge fragment of the stone sheer through the roof, on a visit to some neighbour, who is far from expecting such a morning call; or perhaps, instead of ascending it dashes horizontally forward, killing on the spot the unfortunate grinder: nor is this the only danger he has to contend with; from inhaling the particles of steel his lungs are sometimes affected with a mortal disease which cuts him off in the middle of his days. The fluted hollows in the blades are ground upon wheels with concave edges. As the grinding in some degree impairs the temper of the steel, the blades after grinding are again slightly heated in the fire. They are then "glazed" by the action of small wheels of wood, called "bobs," moistened with emery and size, and subsequently polished with fine emery and oil, or, if extra finish is required, with *crocus martis*, which gives them the surface of a new razor blade. Many of the first-class sword-blades undergo various expensive and elaborate processes of ornamentation; some are figured by a kind of mezzotint process, an art producing a very showy effect at a small cost, and which was twenty years ago, and may be to the present day for aught we know, much practised

by the Parisian makers of "swords to sell," at a price to suit either the shallow pocket of the French military fop, or, when an opportunity offered, the weighty purse of the gullible Englishman. Others are etched in elaborate designs, by the same means employed to etch a copper-plate for engraving and printing; and others again are *damascened*, as it is called, or inlaid with various designs wrought in silver or gold: this is done by engraving every line and every dot of the design in a dovetailed form, or with the bottom of the line wider than the top: a wire of gold or silver is then forced into these dove-tailed incisions, and from its malleability fills up the entire space. These designs are often purely fanciful, and contrived rather to show the skill of the workman than the talent of the designer. We had, however, the pleasure of seeing at the works of Messrs. Reeves, Greaves and Co. in Charlotte-street, some exquisite specimens of swords thus inlaid, upon the blades of which some of the classical designs of celebrated masters were admirably reproduced, the figures being characterised by a correctness in drawing which the severest artist would be slow to impeach. Here also we saw and handled various weapons finished in the highest practicable style of the art; some etched on the surface in beautiful and chaste designs; others gorgeous and brilliant in patterns of gold; and one which, lying for six months together coiled up in its sheath in the form of a serpent, leaped forth straight and quivering like an arrow in its flight when we drew it out.

In treating on the subject of swords, however briefly, we can hardly omit a reference to the famous Damascus blades, concerning which so many fabulous things have been said and sung. Partly owing to these old-world stories and lying legends, and partly owing to the constitutional fondness of Englishmen for every thing foreign, there exists a foolish *prestige* in favour of Damascus swords, for which men are willing to pay most anomalous prices; although it is a fact which has been proved again and again, that they will not stand the test to which good English blades are exposed, and that they may be cut into shreds by a nervous arm wielding an English weapon of the same weight. The main charm perhaps of the Damascus blades is their appearance; they are all distinguished by the granular texture of the steel, the mode of producing which appears to be unknown to the manufacturers of other nations. Numberless experiments have been made, as well in England as in different parts of the Continent, in the hope of discovering the mode of producing this peculiar granulation of the metal. Bars of steel have been twisted and welded, and slit and welded and twisted over again; they have been compounded of metals produced by different manufacturing processes; they have been channelled in hollows and inlaid with steel from other countries; they have been cut into seraps, formed into fag-gots, and then welded again into solid bars; they have been swaddled in iron wire which has been forged into their substance; in fact, they have been subjected to every ceremony that the imagination could devise, and though the experiments made have often resulted in the production of weapons as good or better than those of Damascus, yet we are not aware that the peculiar texture of the

Damascus sword-blade can be successfully imitated by any European maker.

Next to the blade, the hilt is the most important part of the sword. The best hilts are forged from steel, and the completion of these, when, as in the case of some of the best basket-hilted swords, much ornamentation is added, is a work of much time and labour. There is no end to the variety of patterns and expensive moulds brought into requisition in the hilt of swords of a first-rate description, or of the manual labour expended in getting them up in an artistic style. The sheath or scabbard, again, demands the services of the designer and the modeller, the chape in the sheath of a dress sword being generally highly ornamented. The best steel sheaths are made by bending thin strips of the metal round a mandril, welding or soldering them together, and then grinding and polishing the surface.

In addition to the swords made at Birmingham, there are produced, by the same makers, a vast number of matchets, a species of tool or weapon very little known, we imagine, to our readers. They are huge bare blades, some twenty inches or more in length and two in width, and of very various weight and substance, fitted to rude handles of horn or wood. They are exported in great numbers, and serve among semi-civilized races either as a tool, a weapon, or a medium of barter; they are said, too, to be a necessary implement in the sugar plantations.

We have well-nigh filled the space allotted to us upon the subject of Birmingham, and must cut short our survey, brief and partial as it has been. We should have liked to have taken the reader with us to have witnessed in various factories the construction of the thousand and one useful articles which constitute the "toy trade" of Birmingham, an expression which embraces almost every portable article of domestic utility formed from iron or the mixed metals. We should have enjoyed a visit to Soho together, a place ever memorable as associated with the names of Boulton and Watts, and where steam-engines are still constructed, though the place has passed into new hands. We could have passed a pleasant hour in the galleries of Messrs. Collis in Church-street, among the dies and medals of the late Sir Edward Thomason, and in contemplating the massive proportions of the Warwick vase, and the beautiful bronze statues and statuettes with which the show-rooms are adorned. Were space at our command, moreover, we would stroll with him through the rooms of Messrs. Messengers and Sons, whose various artistic performances in bronze and iron have earned them a reputation as durable as the material in which they work. We would dive with him, too, into the depths of dirty Water-street, and introduce him to the rolling-mills of Messrs. Muntz, whose gigantic machinery kneads out iron and copper as readily as the cook kneads her pie-crust, and where, by way of illustrating the operation of the cylinders, a piece of metal, not eight inches in length, was rolled in three minutes into a hatful of shining ribbon, measuring nearly three hundred inches. But, as it is, all these things, and a hundred others besides, must be left to another opportunity, if it should ever occur, or to the enterpris-

ing research of the reader, whom, perhaps, our report may stimulate to visit the metropolis of central England. But there is yet one manufactory which claims especial mention at our hands, and which all who visit Birmingham with the design of inspecting her manufactures will do well to see. We allude to the Cambridge-street works, the largest within the town of Birmingham. They are the property of Mr. Winfield, under whom they have grown rapidly until they have reached the dimensions of a small town. They are situated, we believe, on the very spot that was laid waste by fire at the time of the Priestley riots, and which for a long time remained waste. On this spot, too, Baskerville had his office and printed his celebrated editions of English works, and here, by his own desire, he was buried, though he was not allowed to rest in the grave he had chosen, his body being exhumed not many years ago in digging a new canal.

Mr. Winfield is the original patentee of the invention of bedsteads and couches of metal, and at these works immense numbers of these indispensable articles are fabricated at all prices, from the lowest to the highest, and of every variety of design from the plainest to the most elegant and ornamental. But he who would expect to find nothing but bedsteads at these works would be very agreeably deceived: the fact is, that everything which the most luxuriously fastidious man can want to adorn his residence with, or to conduce to his comfort, whether he be fast asleep or wide awake, supposing only that it can be manufactured in metal, is here to be found, and that in such wholesale quantities as to perplex the choice of the purchaser. The number of persons continually employed in the works is little short of eight hundred, and we were given to understand that they are engaged upon a system by the working of which a trustworthy artisan is rarely discharged, while the idle and careless discharge themselves and cease to encumber the establishment. Here every process of manufacture necessary for the completion of the articles produced is carried on upon the premises. Here is a reduplication, to all appearance, of the rolling-mills of Messrs. Muntz, with all their ponderous machinery, as well as smelting-furnaces, where the metals are mixed and refined and cast for rolling either for consumption on the spot or for other manufacturers. Here are powerful machines for drawing metal piping, and others for coating rods of iron in suits of shining brass. Here may be seen innumerable castings of exquisite designs, combining elegance with usefulness. Here are forges and foundries, carvers, turners, polishers, and fitters, and an army of men variously employed in processes which but to specify would be to go again over ground we have already trod. The interior of this vast manufactory is a little world of industrial and artistic activity; abundance of room, of light, and of air, and the prevalence of order, decorum, cheerfulness, and cleanliness being the chief characteristics of the scene.

The results of these manifold and well-ordered labours are to be seen to the greatest perfection in the extensive show-rooms, where many designs of singular beauty may be found accessory to purposes of utility and personal comfort. Bedsteads of

every form and style, from the couch of the cottager to that of the courtier, many of them most gracefully conceived, show that talent of no mean order has been called into exercise; but in an artistic point of view, perhaps, the pendant lamps and chandeliers form the most attractive objects. These vary much both in design and construction—the burnished metal contrasting in some with the quiet hues of semi-transparent blossoms and flowers in coloured and white glass. A multitude of other articles in brass and bronze, such as cornices, curtain bands, pier and console tables, balustrade bars, etc., etc., most if not all of them characterised by some originality in conception, attest the ingenuity of the workmen and the extensive resources of the establishment.

There is one spot, however, in these works which more than any other enlists our sympathy while it demands our admiration. This is the noble, lofty, and spacious school-room, constructed in the very heart of the establishment, capable of accommodating from two to three hundred pupils, and where, under the superintendence of one of the principals, instruction is daily imparted by four well-qualified masters to the boys and lads employed in the works. We observed that vocal music forms one of the media of instruction. The books and necessary materials for study are supplied gratuitously by the proprietors, who have also erected, contiguous to the school-room, a convenient lavatory, where the lads may bathe their swart faces, and enter upon the pursuit of knowledge with clean hands. We look upon that school-room as the crowning ornament of the establishment and an honour to the town.

In taking leave of our subject, we can but express our acknowledgments for the unvarying politeness with which our intrusions into so many of the privacies of art and industry were not merely permitted but encouraged, and the promptitude with which our perhaps not very moderate curiosity was everywhere satisfied. If we have not recorded minutely all that we saw, it may be that we are influenced by motives which the general reader will not be slow to guess nor the inventive manufacturer to appreciate. We are far from considering that we have done anything like justice to the industrial exploits of this great centre of ingenious and manful labour; but we profess no more than to give the unpractised reader a general idea of what is going on within and around the town of Birmingham, and to let him know, in some degree at least, the extent of his obligations to her restless and unceasing activities.

We have, in conclusion, only one cause of complaint, and that is against the pebbly-hearted pavements of the vast majority of the Birmingham streets, which seem to have been laid down for the special benefit of the chiropodists; we have brought away a crop of corns and a brace of bunions, which are the lawful property of the Birmingham Paving Commissioners, though how we are to put them in possession of their rights is not at present sufficiently plain. Meanwhile, we may suggest, that if flag-stones are scarce in the neighbourhood, sheets of iron are sufficiently abundant, and from these a permanent and, in the end, a cheap footway might be laid down for the accommodation of pedestrians.

THE FEAR OF DEATH REMOVED.

THOU speakest of the fear of death, its ghastliness and gloom,
And dreary shadows flung across the portals of the tomb;
Thou sayest that the best of men must tremble like the grass,
When from the loved and lovely earth to unknown worlds they pass;
Thou picturest the love of home, the light of childhood's sky,
And askest, who could leave such things with no heart-breaking sigh?

My heart was pained; and oft I thought, Can this be true of those,
Who have on Jesus cast the guilt and burden of their woes?
Till, as I mused, the truths of God, like beacon-fires at night,
Gleamed forth from scripture's vivid page upon my aching sight:—
"I know that my Redeemer lives; and, though my flesh must die,
By dying he shall swallow up the grave in victory.
Ay, in the shadowy vale of death no evil will I fear,
For thou art with me, thou, my God, to animate and cheer."

No wild dreams these,—I speak of things that oftentimes have been;
Of parting words that I have heard and death-beds I have seen;
Of a long-loved father, circled by his children and his wife,
With every joy to gladden earth and bind him unto life,
Who calmly said, "My children must not stay me from my rest;
My work is finished, and I long to sleep on Jesu's breast;
Death cannot part me from his love—Lord Jesus, it is thou—
I have no fear, my children; for my Lord is with me now."

And gentle girls too have I seen, who seemed for earth too frail,
Tread with a firm, confiding step adown that lonesome vale;
Ay, and on childhood's pallid lip have words of triumph played,
And tiny fingers, clasped in death, told, "I am not afraid."
But why speak on of scenes like these, when every heart must know
Some parent, partner, brother, child, who trembled not to go,
Where Jesu's steps had gone before, and he himself is nigh,
Whispering above those boisterous waves, "Fear nothing, it is I!"

Ours is the grief, who still are left in this far wilderness,
Which will at times, now they are gone, seem blank and comfortless.
For moments spent with loving hearts are breezes from the hills,
And the balm of Christian brotherhood like Eden's dew distils;
And we, whose footsteps and whose hearts so often fail and faint,
Seem ill to spare the cheering voice of one departed saint.

Thus heaven is gathering, one by one, in its capacious breast,
All that is pure, and permanent, and beautiful, and blest;
The family is scatter'd yet, though of one home and heart,
Part militant in earthly gloom, in heavenly glory part.
But who can speak the rapture, when the circle is complete,
And all the children sundered now before their Father meet?
One fold, one shepherd, one employ, one everlasting home:
"Lo! I come quickly." "Even so, Amen! Lord Jesus, come!"*

* Abridged from a recently published volume, entitled "WATER FROM THE WELL-SPRING," by Rev. E. H. Bickersteth, son of the late excellent Mr. Bickersteth, of Wotton.

Varieties.

BALMORAL.—A new royal residence is about to be erected at Balmoral, the favourite summer resort of her majesty. The contracts are completed, and the work is to be executed by tradesmen residing in the district.

BEET-ROOT SUGAR.—The experiment of manufacturing sugar from beet-root in Ireland has, it appears, removed all doubt of its ultimate success. The works are being carried on by a company called the Irish Beet Sugar Company, with a royal charter, and a subscribed capital of 120,000*l.* in 20*l.* shares, with power of increase to half a million. Their establishments at present are limited to the localities of Mountmellick and Donoughmore, in the Queen's county, and these are adapted to the consumption of 50 tons of roots per day. The total of sugar manufactured and sold thus far has been about 80 tons, while the prices realized have been between 31*l.* and 32*l.*, exclusive of duty, leaving, it is said, a large profit. At Mountmellick the number of persons employed is 230, of all ages, and the company announce that they intend to erect two new factories next year, which will require the produce of 1000 acres, or 20,000 tons of roots each. At the same time, they calculate upon an increase of profit from the sale of the pulp and residue of the juice, as soon as the farmers can be induced to employ them as food for cattle and as manure.

NEW USE OF MILK.—In consequence of the advance in the price of olive oil, a manufacturer of woollen cloths, in the neighbourhood of Thurlstone, tried whether milk mixed with oil would not answer the purpose. The experiment fully succeeded, the mixture being far better than olive oil alone. The consequence has been, that milk has advanced to 1*s.* 4*d.* per gallon in the neighbourhood of the woollen cloth mills.

ISTHMUS OF DARIEN SHIP CANAL.—Much attention is being directed to this proposed important undertaking, and a company is in course of formation to carry it out. It is to be 39 miles in length, or, in a direct line, but 33 miles. The greatest distance of cutting will be 30 miles, and the canal is to be constructed without locks—an advantage which none of the numerous rival schemes have been able to offer. It is to be at least 160 feet wide and 30 feet deep, in order to allow the tide of the Pacific to flow right through it across to the Atlantic, so that ships bound from the Pacific to the Atlantic would pass with the flood, and those from the Atlantic to the Pacific with the ebb tide of the latter. These alternate currents, occurring every six hours, would, it is supposed, cause the canal to last for ages, as their effects would be gradually to enlarge it, widening the banks and deepening the bottom. With the tide flowing at the rate of three or four miles an hour, it is thought probable that the passage could be effected in about six and a half hours.

NAPOLEON'S WILL.—The late Emperor Napoleon I made his will while at St. Helena, which was proved in London shortly after his decease, and deposited with all other original wills in the fire-proof room of the registry of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, where it has been inspected by thousands of the curious, both Englishmen and foreigners. An application, however, has been recently made that it should be delivered up to the French nation. As soon as an official notarial copy thereof is made, the Queen's proctor and the registrar of the Prerogative Court are directed to attend on Lord John Russell, to deliver the same to his Lordship for transmission to the French authorities.

ANCIENT CHAPEL IN LEADENHALL-STREET.—It has long been known that a beautiful vestige of early English architecture was in existence beneath No. 110 in Leadenhall-street, and directly opposite Aldgate-pump. The arches and vaults on the basement have been hitherto used as a warehouse for wood and other materials; but the extreme beauty of the details, particularly the sculpture and groining, has just led to an investigation. From the ground to the crown of the arches is 10 feet; and, allowing the shafts to be buried 16 feet, gives a height of 26 feet to the interior of the building. The iron hinges of the casements are still attached to the walls, from which circumstance it is conjectured that the structure originally stood on the surface, but that the ground outside has been raised gradually, until the chapel has assumed its present cryptal position. The style of the architecture would seem to point to a period posterior to the 12th century.

WHALE FISHERIES.—Captain Penny, the eminent arctic navigator, has succeeded in forming a company for the purpose of carrying on whale and other fisheries, and founding a permanent settlement in the arctic regions—a scheme which has occupied his attention for a great number of years. The objects of this company are the application of the powers of the auxiliary screw to whaling vessels, the establishment of fishing settlements in the bays and inlets of Davis Straits, and especially of founding a fishing and mining colony in an inlet known as Northumberland Inlet, or Hogarth Sound, discovered by Captain Penny, on the shores of which there is great mineral wealth, especially in plumbago, and where the whales hunted from other fishing grounds find refuge, and especially abound during the spring months. The company propose sending two new screw steam whalers, of 500 tons each, in the spring months to the seas between Greenland and Nova Zembla. They would remain there till the ice forms in November, when they would return with the produce of the fishing up to that time, leaving the settlers to prosecute the inshore fishery, and store up the produce until the return of the steamers in the following year.

ENCYCLOPEDIA BRITANNICA.—A new edition, being the eighth of this stupendous work, is about to be issued. The successive editions of this truly national work form a striking index of the progress of literature and science. It was first published in 1771, in 3 vols. quarto; next, in 10 vols. in 1778; in 18 vols. in 1797, to which was added the supplement by Bp. Gleig, in 2 vols. in 1801. In 1810 the work in its fourth edition was extended to 20 vols. The rapid advance of various departments of knowledge in subsequent years rendered it difficult to embody the new matter in the work, and a supplement was commenced in 1815 and finished in 1824, in 6 vols. The seventh edition, completed in 1842, contained whatever was of permanent value in previous editions and in the supplement, with much new matter, contributed by the most eminent writers in literature and science.

BOOK FAIR.—The Prussian booksellers intend to establish a grand book fair at Berlin, in order to be independent of that at Leipsic.

A NEWLY-INVENTED RIFLE-BULLET MACHINE.—The superintending engineer of the Dial-square Royal Arsenal has invented a novel and ingenious machine, capable of turning out 100,000 bullets per day in a most perfect manner. The Board of Ordnance have adopted it for the supply of the British service with rifle-bullets.